

After repeated crossings of the 'apparently normal' females with the albino sire, His Highness at last obtained two albino male stags in the fourth generation; it is, however, scientifically inaccurate to say that the fourth generation bred true to type; for the genetic constitution of the female *D* is in no way different from that of the females *A*, *B* and *C*.

The fact that the albino type was only seen in the fourth generation was due to a mere chance; the probabilities for albino progeny in the second and third generations were equally strong as in the case of the fourth generation. Theoretically the results of the various matings (*A*, *B*, *C* and *D*) should have been 50 per cent albinos against 50 per cent normal coated animals. The only reason why His Highness did not obtain these results is the small number of births. If we wish in practice to obtain results approaching the proportions established by theory, a much larger number of experiments is necessary.

In the note referred to above, His Highness of Partabgarh mentioned another experiment, the crossing of an albino female parakeet (canary yellow in colour, with ruby eyes)—with a male blossom-headed parakeet (orange in colour with light pink head and ruby eyes), that is to say,

♂ *Psittacula cyanocephala* × ♀ *Psittacula krameri*.

I should be very grateful to His Highness if either through the pages of this *Journal* or otherwise, he lets me know the result of such an attempt. Genetically the experiment is a very interesting one for two reasons, the first being the question of interspecific hybridisation between two distinct species of the genus *Psittacula* differing in many somatic characters, and the second reason being the possible hereditary behaviour of the two colour anomalies, which are clearly two mutations and which must be ascribed to the phenomenon of 'flavism' rather than to that of 'albinism'.

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10.—STRANGE DEATH OF A YOUNG CUCKOO (*CUCULUS CANORUS*).

While in Sonemarg, Kashmir, on June 25th of last year (1944) some friends showed me a nest of a plumbeous redstart (*Rhyacornis f. fuliginosa*) which contained a young cuckoo just hatched. Two eggs in an advanced state of incubation and belonging to the redstarts lay smashed on the ground, presumably having been ejected from the nest by the cuckoo. I intended to keep the nest under observation until the cuckoo should grow bigger before photographing it. Visiting it again on the following day, I was surprised to find the bird dead. Examination showed that the cuckoo had, by some accident, swallowed several strands of a quantity of human hair which had been used to line the nest. One end of the hairs was down the bird's throat while the other

end remained attached to the bottom of the nest. Dissection (kindly performed by Mr. McCann) revealed that the hairs had reached the stomach where they became rolled into a large ball. A strand of hair was also caught up at the base of the tongue, and due to the peristaltic movement of the stomach, had been twisted tighter and tighter round the tongue until the bird was choked and killed. The strands of hair between the base of the tongue and the stomach had been subjected to such twisting that, under a magnifying glass, they look like the twisted wires of a length of cable.

It would be interesting to know if other readers have experience of young birds dying from a similar strange cause.

BOMBAY.

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15th March 1945.

II.—THE AVOCET (*RECURVIROSTRA AVOCETTA* LINN.) BREEDING IN INDIA.

On a recent visit to the famous flamingo nesting colony on the Great Rann of Kutch (19-23 April 1945) I came upon a considerable gathering of avocets on a flat muddy island exposed by the gradual drying up of the water. I had not met with this species at all during the Kutch bird survey (August to October 1943 and March/April 1944), and even now besides this one place it was not to be seen anywhere else in Kutch. My first impression was that the birds had collected here prior to emigration, but their general behaviour was somewhat odd and early excited suspicion. Pairs kept constantly flying overhead in a highly agitated manner, rather like nesting red-wattled lapwings, screaming *kleet, kleet, kleet* etc., continuously at the rate of about 3 per second. The quality of this sound was very like the call of the Stone-Curlew (*Burhinus*).

Suspicion deepened when a flamingo chick I was chasing to catch and ring, strayed into a spot where it was furiously set upon by one of a pair of avocets, while the other was assiduously fluttering along the ground doing the broken wing trick, presumably against me. A search soon disclosed an unlined scrape with 4 eggs. In the near distance, about two furlongs away (and within half a mile of the flamingo city) there were a thousand or more avocets dotted about. A little watching soon convinced me that they were not there merely on passage. As I approached the place a great many birds started running about, crouching, stretching open their wings above the back and doing the broken wing trick, while many took to the air flying around in agitation. At one time, more than 30 birds were fluttering on the ground all around me. It soon became evident that this vast concourse of avocets were actually nesting here. Standing in one spot I counted over 40 nests a few yards from each other. There were over 150 nests in an area of 4-6 acres, and beyond were hundreds more. The eggs were laid on the hard baked mud sometimes on a bed